

# AMERICANS OF TO-DAY AND TO-MORROW

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ALBERT  
J.  
BEVERIDGE



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A M E R I C A N S  
OF  
TO-DAY AND TO-MORROW

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*BY*

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“THE BIBLE AS GOOD READING,” “WORK AND  
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THE DAWN OF A GOLDEN AGE



# AMERICANS OF TO-DAY AND TO-MORROW

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## CHAPTER I

### THE DAWN OF A GOLDEN AGE

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**A** FINE young fellow in a Western college, with that secret desire to do large things with his life hidden away in his breast, as it is in the hearts of most young Americans, said one day, after finishing a thesis on the great days of a former time in history: "Why could not I have lived in that day? Men did great things and did them well then. What sheer joy to be one of the people who dominate human events!"

He had been studying and writing of one of the ruling nations of history. Another young fellow standing by replied:

"That day is dawning for America. The best and biggest things that Rome did in her time and Greece and France, and later England, the

American people will do; and we shall do our work as much better than they did theirs as our period is in advance of theirs. This republic will be the determining factor in this world for centuries, never fear; and the beginning of our primacy in human affairs will occur during our lifetime. Oh, you and I live in a golden age! Fear not for the lack of mighty circumstances—these come in regiments and battalions, and they even now approach. Get ready for them—don't mope and become sick with regret."

The first youth expressed the longing of every young American; the second, the belief of every vital, vigorous young American. He spoke the belief, too, of the American people. More than this, he expressed what was even then the awakening thought of the far-seeing statesmen of other countries, and what is now their settled conviction, for is not American conquest of the world the supreme concern of every cabinet of Europe? But, most of all, he spoke the truth of the universal situation.

A great historian, speaking of the contradiction of English policy under Elizabeth and seeking to explain the disavowed craft of that great

monarch as historically negated by her documentary and ostensible policy, said that when she was compelled to play the chess game of international politics on the board, she played it well to the eye of the time; but that, to the eye of history, she was in reality obeying the instinct of the British nation in the large and general current of the purposes, interests and destiny of her people. She secretly helped, for instance, the Dutch "beggars of the sea," while she maintained a proper governmental attitude toward Spain openly. That is why Elizabeth is *the* monarch of monarchs to all English hearts; she expressed in her real policy and deeds the instinct of the English merchant, trader, farmer—the instinct of the English people. This instinct of a people, this massed and combined intelligence of a nation, is seldom wrong. It grows out of their situation, of the ripeness of their hour in human history, of a subconsciousness of their strength and preparedness. And this national instinct of a people is better evidence of what that instinct tells us, and of the essential justice and righteousness of that instinct's conclusions than any individual's mere verbal dem-

onstration to the contrary. If the American people feel and believe that they have now come to be the dominant factor in the affairs of the human race, that belief is better proof of that fact itself, and a more reliable assurance of the beneficence of that fact, than all the essays to the contrary that could be written.

And just that is the settled conclusion of the twentieth-century American.

Put the plummet of your inquiry into the depths of a street-car driver's intelligence and you will find that his profoundest belief is that Americans are the greatest people in the world. Make like experiment with the farmer boy, and you will find a like result. Put the test to some merchant who has created a business, great or small; there, the same answer will speak to you. Take the coldest banker in the land, and you will find his greatest pride, exceeding the pride of gold, is that he is a citizen—a living part—of the dominant nation of the world.

Take another illustration: It is a curious but common experience of public speakers that, though different arguments are needed for different audiences, one familiar appeal affects all

American audiences alike—the appeal to them as citizens of the first power of the world. A political orator of facility and resource told me that while campaigning in Dakota he found restlessness until he turned to the theme of the republic as the master nation; and the response was the enthusiasm of men marching to war. Conversely, whoever has witnessed a banquet of New York bankers notes that they receive the wit of their speakers with cordial laughter, the arguments of sound economists with tolerant but careless assent, and everything with a lukewarm indifference, until some trumpet voice sounds the note of American supremacy; and then the observer always beholds those men, in whom the countinghouse is popularly supposed to have atrophied patriotism, spring to their feet like schoolboys and cheer like soldiers on the charge.

This same phenomenon of an almost religious faith in America's permanent destiny, manifested in equal fervor in the most widely different types of communities and the most utterly unlike characters, reveals a profound truth—the truth of our national instinct that we are to be supreme and that our supremacy is already beginning.

This faith is not only the largest element in its accomplishment, but it is of practical and tangible value to every young American in his daily life and personal career.

Let us see whether this is merely the vainglory of national enthusiasm or whether the realities justify it. Let us imagine ourselves impartial observers, from some far height, of the rolling world below. The first thing we shall note is comparative national locations. England, so superbly located for insular security and maritime dominance when the affairs of civilization were confined to Europe, we now see disadvantageously located when those affairs are broadened over all the oceans and touch the shores of all the continents. No matter how splendid her work in the past, we are now talking of situation with reference to the present. Then we see France literally wedged in between Germany and Spain. It was a fine position when the Mediterranean was still the center of human action. And the position of Italy at a like period was superb. But with the great past of Italy and France we have nothing now to do; we are studying present conditions. And, topographic-



ally speaking, their respective locations are not important from the twentieth-century point of view. Germany we observe as a curious and limited coloring of the world's map, without advantage in position, embarrassed by immediate propinquity to hostile neighbors. The amazing vitality of the people who live in this little land; their wonderful organization of activities, commercial, scientific, military, maritime; the soul of their great emperor, which seems to gather strength from every subject and radiate that strength again to his people in vivifying streams of national hope and achievement—all these are matters of present and immediate concern; but these we must take account of presently. Let us now confine ourselves to geography. Viewing merely situation, then, Germany is not formidable. For present purposes neither is Russia, although the certainties of her future expansion will, in the sweep of the centuries, make her location perhaps the most advantageous of all. Now compare the location of the American republic.

First of all, it is imperial in size. You can put all of Great Britain down in any one of sev-

eral of its states. The same is true of Germany or France or any other power in the world, excepting only Russia. The first thing, then, that compels attention is the immensity of the American republic's dimensions.

It is imperially bounded, also. On the east is one of the world's greatest oceans; on the west is the other of the world's greatest oceans; on the south is the world's greatest gulf; on its north are the world's greatest lakes. Through its center runs the world's greatest river; in its west are the world's greatest mountains, heavy with the world's richest mines. You will say at the first glance that here is a land designed by Nature for separate development, disconnected from the rest of the human world and untroubled with external affairs. Here, you will say at the first glance, is a location which compels the nation which occupies it to be an inland people.

Yes! But at second glance you will say the reverse. For look at its coast line. And then look at the coast line of the other five greatest maritime nations. The coast line of the republic alone exceeds the coast lines of the other five put together. And its harbors—look at them; more

in number than those of any other two maritime nations and unsurpassed in excellence on any shores of any seas. And behold, now, how cunningly the Master Contriver has placed these American harbors. Their locations are nothing short of triumphs of commercial and military strategy. New York, Baltimore, Philadelphia, Charleston, Boston, Mobile, New Orleans and all the harbors of the Gulf, San Francisco and the harbors of the Pacific—an impressive chain of ports, is it not? Harbors looking out upon Europe and inviting Europe; harbors looking out upon the Caribbean waters and the countries of South America and inviting them; harbors looking out upon the Pacific and the countries of the Orient and inviting them. Now consider ocean channels and currents; and then observe the nicety with which the republic's sea doors are located with reference to these; and, to sum up the whole situation, that man's reason is palsied who denies the conclusions of this syllogism of Nature.

A land capable of supporting a people defended from the rest of the world so long as they choose, its location is calculated to lead that people out

over the world whenever they will. And so we see that in point of situation the country over which floats the Stars and Stripes is perfectly placed not only for self-development but for world dominance. Immeasurable as Nature has made its inland opportunities, Nature has repeated and even magnified its ocean possibilities. And the observer, looking down as the globe rolls beneath him, says, "In point of location and opportunities springing out of mere situation, this land, of all lands, is the chosen one of fortune."

And so the young American's sublime faith in his country's future springs, first of all, out of comparative geography. "Why, look where I live!" says the young American of to-day. "My home is on the very throne of things. If my nation is not the master of the world's circumstances, it certainly is not the fault of the republic's location. Whose fault will it be, then, should such mastery not come to us? My fault and mine only. And my fault it shall not be. I will be worthy, as one citizen, of our opportunity—an opportunity so vast that it is difficult to comprehend."

So, I take it, speaks every young American's

heart to him; and in obedience to that voice he will find an inspiration, even for his individual career, which will make that career as large in proportion as his country's situation in the world; and an inspiration which will glorify that career with an ideal more exalted than any yet given to man.

An acute young American talking with a companion on this very theme said, "Quite true, splendidly true; but yet there is in it an element of national egotism which repels." "No, not egotism," said his companion. "It passes that; it reaches the plane of exaltation; it is a phase of faith which has in it something of the divine. No one calls our belief that we are the children of a universal God—the highest conception yet developed by human thought—no one calls that egotism. And this conception of our national dominance is nearly akin to that. But whatever it is, it is a *fact*, and that is the chief thing—the largest fact in contemporary human circumstance."

Of course location is not all. Resources are even more important. They are not to be ex-

tensively reviewed here; only attention is called to them. The purpose is to acquaint the young American with the tangible foundations of his faith in his country and its future; for that faith is and will be his highest inspiration to personal effort. The purpose is to make him familiar with the elements of power everywhere around him, which he can and must forge into an irresistible individual career. And as our country's regal position among the nations rouses pride in the young American's breast, so each young American thus making the very most of his individual career renders certain that national greatness the dream of which is the motive power of his effort.

"I admire your country, but I admire your people less," said a young German in Berlin one night, a young man already marked as certain to be a large figure in future German statesmanship. He spoke with that frankness which is a singular and common characteristic of all essentially great men. It was a statement so at variance with the stereotyped phrase of foreign laudation when speaking to an American of the American people, that it was worth following up. So it was followed up.

“I mean this,” he said. “Your country has a situation in the world to which our German location is insignificant; you have resources to which our German resources are just nothing at all. Between German resources and American resources there is no comparison—only glaring contrast. Yet we compete with you in the markets of the world. We are rapidly passing you as a maritime power. We are able to do this because every bit of our energy is carefully organized. None goes to waste. Every ounce of muscle, every volt of nerve and brain power is devoted to specific ends along lines of least resistance.

“On the contrary, much as you boast of your organization you do not organize at all. What success you have is due to the incomparable richness of your country and to the sheer strength of your people. You waste, waste, waste—everywhere you waste. You waste energy; you waste resources; you scatter in effort. Take a familiar illustration—the trees out there in the street suggest one. We make land otherwise absolutely worthless pay enormously by scientific forestry; you cut your forests down like vandals in order

that a few men may get rich in a few years. Thus a great source of what should be perpetual wealth is lost to you; your streams are dried up and your country loses incalculable millions by an almost barbarous lack of sensible management. Your activity is not the development of resources; it is the destruction of resources. With us it is the contrary. Our resources are small, as I have said, but they are conserved, nourished, made the most of; and, though they yield hundreds and even thousands of per cent. more in proportion than yours do, instead of diminishing them we increase them."

That conversation was better than the reading of many volumes, and pointed out an undoubted weakness in our individual and national method; but it admitted—and that is the purpose of reproducing it here—the incomparable magnitude of our national wealth.

It is useless to give the figures. The statistics of our agricultural products, of our mineral output, of our manufacturing industry more than amaze us. They simply stun the intellect; the understanding is paralyzed in its attempt to grasp them.



The point is that the young American finds himself in a country unrivaled in its world location; but also he finds himself surrounded by multitudinous resources so great that no mind has grasped their immensity. These are his tools; these are his commission, direct from Nature herself, appointing him the master craftsman in human affairs now and for some centuries to come. And it is these which command him to be as large and as hopeful and as conqueringly vigorous in his personal life as are the elements of greatness with which fortune has endowed his country. Optimism is too poor a word for what ought to be the attitude of the young American's mind. That which in the citizen of another country would be neurotic exaltation is, to the young American, only the normal—and the only normal—state of his intellect and aspiration.



THE NEED OF NATIONAL  
CONSERVATISM



## CHAPTER II

### THE NEED OF NATIONAL CONSERVATISM

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THE American of to-day is, first of all, the possessor of strength—fortune in location, opulence in resources. He has an advantage in all the natural elements which makes men of other lands almost beggars in comparison. He is a very lord of power. But it is a strange fact that the possessor of great power is apt to use it riotously. Youth throws away life as though youth were a millionaire of vitality. Perhaps this is the working out of some deep law of equilibrium, which, after all, will not let strength become too strong. That we Americans have been using the great bank account which Nature put to our credit with the recklessness of a spendthrift, the deep criticism of the young German in the first chapter demonstrates; and the observation of all thoughtful people confirms it. And so it is that, as pointed out, Germany, with puny resources, is able to compete with us on the high seas and in

the markets of the world. She does this by organization—by the careful conservation of what she has. In the last five years the papers have been filled with despatches reciting afresh what careful students have known for the last ten years, that we are in actual danger from German rivalry. It is a very poor thing to get angry with Germany on that account; rather, we should respect her. Respect her and also learn a lesson from her—a lesson which England would have done well to learn when Mr. Williams, many years ago, brought out his remarkable book, “Made in Germany.” And that lesson is the combined lesson of conservation of our resources and organization of our energies. Henceforth this must be the dominant note in American national policy and in the personal conduct of each American. *Conservation*—that is, the husbanding of all of our strength and all of our resources, and the spending of them wisely to good and effective uses.

There is one characteristic which I am sure every person who has thought deeply and long over the make-up of the American mind and disposition will agree is, and will always be, the sav-

ing American grace, and that is the virtue of adaptability. We encounter a new and perfectly unfamiliar situation: we do not attempt to bend that situation to preconceived notions. We simply adapt ourselves to it and solve its difficulties according to the wisdom of the event. Indeed, it may well be said that *the* American characteristic is adaptability. Recognizing, then, our advantage over the remainder of the world in all that makes for national power and, therefore, for individual success; recognizing, too, the gigantic wastefulness of our past methods, the American of to-day realizes also that for the nation at large and for each citizen thereof a cautious conservatism is the duty of the hour and of the country. I cannot get out of my mind the remark of the Japanese statesman who said, "We hope to prevail in the war with Russia because small resources well organized are more powerful than great resources poorly organized." How his hope was justified all the world knows.

With the American's adaptability, with his love of and insistence upon absolute truth, his demand to know just how his account stands so that he

may work according to it, it is a fair conclusion that the young American of the twentieth century will make himself, first of all, a conservative man. There is nothing worse for any of us, nothing worse for a nation, than to run after every hue and cry that is raised, simply because the hue and cry is novel and appears attractive. We must remember that nine tenths of all propositions advanced are unsound. It is useful to reflect upon the records of the Patent Office. Tens of thousands of inventions prove of no practical moment. It is not meant by this that we should not have hospitality for new ideas. It is meant merely that we should make it the habit of our lives to apply cold common sense to our enthusiasms.

This may take out of our effort some of its *élan*, but it will add to it a steadiness of purpose better than any dash. A French soldier of Napoleon declared that "in the attack Frenchmen were incomparably strong—in defeat they were childishly weak; whereas the stolid steadiness of the English was even more admirable when they were beaten than when they were victorious."



The American of the twentieth century will surely see this — sees it now. He says to himself as he rises in the morning, “My watchword for this day is ‘steadiness and poise.’” He declares: “I do not propose to burn my energies up agitating for this *ism* or that *ism*. I do not propose to scatter my strength fighting for verbal ‘rights’ which I am told belong to me. I mean that my work shall be for substantial ends.” And so he introduces into his life the rule of the three modern graces — steadiness, system, conservatism.

It is a thing for us Americans to think about, and think about very solidly and very earnestly. Other people will think about it if we do not—*do* think about it whether we do or not, and act on their thought. It is a fine thing to know just what criticisms your rivals make of you; they are probably sound. And instead of avoiding them one should get hold of them, if one can, and profit by them prayerfully.

“I find,” said a foreign statesman to an American gentleman in the course of a very frank interchange of mutual criticisms on the modern method and conduct of their respective

people, "that you Americans contend too much among yourselves; you waste infinite energy battling against one another. It is a good thing for us. We see our chance. And while you are getting what you call 'rights' from one another we get with our comparatively very insignificant strength much of the fruit which you yourselves might gather for the prosperity of your whole country and the individual happiness of all your citizens."

That was a deep remark, was it not? For do we not find labor and capital in warfare among our very selves? These conflicts, of course, happily are growing less. The hopeful lover of the American people cannot but console himself with the thought that ultimately they will disappear altogether. The American who is developing to-day in all ranks of life is a man upon whose mind the great truth is gradually but surely dawning that the good of each of us is the good of all of us; that there are no separate "rights" of any separate *class* against another; no "duties" of any *class* due to another; but that the happiness and the welfare of all of us are to be found only in a hard-headed, unselfish (although,

deeply considered, most selfish) consideration of what is best for the whole country.

Many years ago the industrial classes in England began quarreling among themselves. Labor wanted many things. Its demands were made with impatient impulsiveness. The manufacturers, the business men, the capitalists resisted with no large wisdom of method or manner—resisted, indeed, with folly and bullheadedness. There was no conciliation, no getting together, no wholesome reasonableness. Meanwhile, in Germany—polytechnic schools, patient steadiness in industry, saving and creative methods in capital, the slow, sure acquirement of skill and effectiveness. The result is that English labor has become unskilled in comparison with the labor of her continental rivals; that English capital has become impotent and nerveless in comparison with the watchful, confident and aggressive capital of her industrial enemies across the channel; and that English business houses are beginning to find themselves without business and English labor is beginning to find itself without employment. And when this process shall have been completed, when breadless women and children,

and men without work shall howl in the streets of London, Birmingham, Manchester and Liverpool, what a spectacle then will the contentions between labor and capital present which have torn industrial and commercial England for a quarter of a century? How much lovelier a picture would conciliation and mutual understanding and sane confidence in each other have presented! And how immeasurably better for English prosperity! With this object lesson being worked out before our very eyes the American of to-day is not liable to fall into the same abysmal error. Shall we not, rather, cease contending among ourselves and unitedly contend with the world? It would be a sorry picture we should make (with our puissance, our intelligence, our acuteness) if we should find ourselves fighting with one another over a division of spoils which our rivals, during our contention among ourselves, had captured. And so it appears that the word of truth which will be in the mouths of all Americans from the dawn of the twentieth century will be conservatism in method and coöperation and forbearance in thought and action.

All who have reached mature years have observed that mere precept and counsel bear small results. At best they produce only occasional and spasmodic good. This chapter is intended to show young Americans that conservatism and steadiness in individual and national American character necessarily grow out of the situation in which the nation finds itself. The saving period—the saving of energy and resources—is now as inevitable as the wasting period now past, or at least passing, was natural. And if each American sees that this is so he will himself make daily effort that these elements of character shall be the dominant ones in him. For if this is the order of our time, if this is the necessity of our circumstance, then each one of us will get himself into line and harmony with this system of things. Otherwise, each one of us will find himself working at cross-purposes with the course of events. Usefulness, success, satisfying fruition of all our work are possible only when our work is in harmony with the general sweep of human activities. And this orderly on-going of the affairs of peoples is fixed and determined by natural conditions. What I am attempting to

show is that these natural conditions require a levelness and discretion of thought and action in American character.

Let the young American ponder this well, and he will see that rashness of scheme and hot-headedness of action and recklessness of method cannot possibly bring him any ultimate good. They are as much "out of gear" with what our internal relationships with one another and our general attitude toward the world at large require of us as the conduct of the highwayman and the forger is antagonistic to the whole scheme of human society. Did you ever think why it is that crime cannot possibly be successful, no matter how able the criminal? It is because the criminal is fighting every settled method of the world. Every device of business becomes a detective; and the criminal's operations are in conflict with the whole course of the daily life of eighty millions of our people—of all people. Let him take precautions never so cunningly, the criminal finds his maturest plans utterly irrational. For precisely the same reasons the methods of mere dash are irrational and out of date. The systematic, the considerate, the orderly, the

conservative—these are the qualities of character which our situation in the world and the present state of our development absolutely require of all Americans. And therefore the type of American now developing, and even this moment already to the front, is the coolest, steadiest, most thoughtful and practical character which the race has yet produced—a man with daring, but the daring of forethought; with energy, but the continuous energy of purpose; with effectiveness, not spasmodic and instantaneous, but the resistless effectiveness of well-considered and moderate plan.

Although oratory in the old sense of that word is dying out (and an excellent good thing it is), plain speech to the people is increasing in its power and in its results. The political platform is the best place to observe the growth of the very elements set down above as the natural and requisite qualities of American character. In a central western state during a recent political campaign an “orator” of attractiveness and picturesque quality was addressing a large crowd made up principally of farmers. Two gentlemen—students always and everywhere of American

tendencies — from the edge of the crowd observed that the audience rapidly melted away. "It is easy to see why," remarked one. "He is appealing to men's passions on unsubstantial grounds; he is announcing propositions attractive on the surface and at the moment of utterance, but harebrained to the thoughtful. And these people are thoughtful. Rural free delivery gives them their daily papers. Their information is as good as the speaker's, and they have acquired that quickness of mental habit characteristic of our rapid age; also, their instinct of soundness is developing astonishingly. So they will not listen to this engaging speaker. What he says offends a sort of conscientiousness of logic in them. They feel that their own capacity for thought and truth is being trifled with."

A week later practically the same audience assembled to listen to another speaker. He spoke boldly, announcing propositions which the old-time player on public passions would have declared surely indiscreet and certainly unpopular. But he spoke most reasonably and, above all things, most frankly. Instead of diminishing, his audience constantly increased. Nothing in the



world attracted them and held them but the substantial reasonableness and conservatism of his utterance.

These two illustrations show how the solid and moderate are developing among the great mass and body of American citizenship. They are sidelights revealing an explanation of the triumph of the conservative cause in our fiercest political battles. Let the young politician who hopes for permanent and enduring success bear in mind that the age of claptrap in our political affairs has passed. He may catch the "groundlings" with it, but he will "make the judicious grieve." And the "judicious" are a majority among Americans, and a steadily augmenting majority.

"I too am not a bit tamed, . . .

I sound my barbaric yawp over the roofs of the world,"

exclaimed Walt Whitman. And when he said it a lot of literary gentlemen who knew nothing of the American people wrote beautiful essays about Whitman's being "the untamed soul of our Western democracy." He was nothing of the kind. The chief note in Whitman's unrul-

and unruly verse is as abhorrent to, and out of harmony with, American character as the war whoop of those savages whom our industry and civilization displaced.

Akin to this false note of Whitman are the shaggy and eccentric cries that we hear with decreasing frequency in the political campaigns. Even powerful party leaders still indulge in unrestrained utterance concerning the "down-trodden people," and "the majesty of the people," and "the will of the people," and other familiar catchwords of the demagogue. They do not mean these weighty words in their true sense. They mean them in the Whitman sense. They use them improperly and passionately to influence the popular mind. The will of the people is indeed the noblest thing on this earth. The common thought of the instructed masses must in the end necessarily be the largest human wisdom. But the will of the people is no spasmodic affair. It is the powerful and prudent conclusions of our eighty millions pouring in steady and continuous stream through the years. It is not a thing to be trifled with or played upon. And he who takes some gust of popular passion,

conspicuous for a day but disappearing to-morrow and regretted the day after, as the evidence of popular desire, and "plays to" it or plays upon it, not only does not understand American character, but misuses, misinterprets and insults it.

How comports this theory of caution with the doctrine of masterfulness of the first chapter? "It is a philosophy of contradictions you hold," said a talented woman in a company of conversation one evening. She was responding to another who had given voice to something of the same general tenor as this book. (And how the drift of conversation shows the common thought running through the common mind of the people!) "No, not contradictions, but consistencies," said a third member of the company; "for the very excess of vigor which we Americans possess implies the necessity for regularity and wise direction in its exercise."

It is related of James H. Hyde, who founded the Equitable Assurance Society on nothing but this rational plan and unconquerable energy, that he said to a young man (also of great power) of a rival company: "You remind me of my own younger days. It seems to me that the

young New Yorker of to-day says of a task: 'This takes ten pounds of energy. Very well; I will give it ten pounds and not a pennyweight more.' When I was founding this institution I said to myself: 'Here is a plan; its execution requires ten pounds of energy. Very well; here goes for a hundred.' And I gave it a hundred; *but I was very sure that it was a plan worth giving a single ounce of energy to.*" That was a thoroughly American utterance. The point is that we must not waste our energies on unsubstantial projects. We must choose our course with care; but, having chosen it and considered it, then we must be no miser in the application of our strength to pursuing that course to its triumphant end. And all of our energy and resources are for use, not for mere hoarding. But in the uses to which we devote them there must be forethought and deliberate choosing.

Careful experience for several years in a serious legislative body like the Senate quickens the faculties of alertness and judgment. A wise Senator remarked one day: "Have you ever observed the ponderous magnitude of bills and resolutions which are introduced only to die?"

Have you observed, too, that many that survive the committee and are pushed with vigor go nevertheless to a certain death? Let me tell you it is because they are not well worked out in advance. Even when they are well worked out as separate propositions, they are not carefully considered in their relation to the whole body of our laws and the established order into which they must go, if enacted into law, and work in unison and harmony. The passion for achievement, the desire to 'do things,' is all right, excellent, indeed; but it should be guided by thought and preparation. Achievement is mischievous unless it is effective, unless it works for the good of the great body of our people and the general betterment of the whole assemblage of our laws. So all of the brain power and nervous energy spent in concocting these impracticable measures is lost both to the man who conceives them and to the people he serves. If such men would only patiently wait and carefully study, and then after consultation work with others, contributing all of their energy to a common effort for the enactment of wise measures or the prevention of unsound policies, the nation would

be served and the usefulness of these men who now waste their talents would be increased quite beyond calculation."

This observation of a conscientious legislator is worth reproduction here; and it is worth, too, the thoughtful meditation of every young American who would grasp that truth most needed at this hour and in the future by all Americans. After all, it was only a diluted form of that wisest pronouncement of that wise man, Paul—"Prove all things; hold fast that which is good."

I am not counseling timidity either of plan or of action on the part of Americans of to-day; I am pointing out merely how absolutely essential it is that the American of the twentieth century shall regulate his vigor and make himself the master of his own masterfulness. I would have him the director of his energies, and not their slave. Let the American pour the tremendous power of his strength and his resources toward the accomplishment of great and worthy purposes. Let him not waste and dissipate his noble advantages, which, well conserved, well used and well directed, render him the very

monarch of the world's destinies, now and far into a future so brilliant that it is dazzling.

There is no danger in pointing out that the very magnificence of our power, our location, our resources compels conservatism to be the dominant trait of the twentieth-century American.

Let no one fear that the enthusiasm of American youth will thereby be harmfully repressed. If every preacher in America were to make conservatism the text of all his sermons for the next decade, and every platform speaker were to do the same, and all the editors were to make that word the theme of all their editorials—even if every mother were to teach her children, not the gospel of mere effort but of thoughtfulness and thoroughness, there would still be no danger that the American character would be unduly toned down. For, after all, there is something about us that is abnormally energetic.

“Pardon me,” said a Russian of world travel and experience, “but the soberest of Americans seem to me to be intoxicated.”

Observing the immense quantity of spirits which Englishmen—and of the better class, too—consume with apparently no effect, the ques-

tion was put to an Englishman of letters who was also an English statesman of large reputation: "How can you Englishmen drink so much? If Americans drank only a small portion of the liquor you consume they would be intoxicated." "I think it must be the difference in our climate, for Americans seem to us constitutionally intoxicated. It appears to us that you have not the power of repose. I have observed your people closely in every section of your own country, and it is very rare when I find one who has time to think."

Whatever an Englishman says, a Russian will always say the reverse; and whatever a Russian says an Englishman will say is quite the contrary of the truth. Yet here were two eminent and observant men making a common statement in almost the same terms.



WHAT SHALL WE DO WITH  
OUR POWER?



## CHAPTER III

### WHAT SHALL WE DO WITH OUR POWER?

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“**W**HAT is the secret of your power?” said one of those who sat by the bedside of the dying Richelieu. “Tell us, that we may continue your work for the good of France.”

And the dying statesman-soldier-priest answered: “Some say it is courage—that I am a lion; some say it is craft—that I am a fox. It is neither. It is justice.”

So runs the noble anecdote. Doubtless it is not true as a literal fact, but it ought to be true; therefore, for the purposes of human instruction it is true. Every man of sensibility occasionally finds a story which so interprets man and the world to him that henceforth it becomes a part of his character.

Such a tale is the legend of Richelieu. Apply it to the republic. Justice! This nation must be just. My first chapter was designed to show our power, growing out of our location on the

map of the world and the resources within us; the second attempted to show that out of the elements of our very being springs our first national and individual necessity of character, to wit, the necessity of conservatism, moderation, thoughtful poise. This chapter is to demonstrate that this power, which is unrivaled in the world if well conserved, must pass all other human influences and is worth while only when used justly.

And if the nation must be just in its dealings with the world, its citizens must be just. Why? Because no citizen of the republic can dissociate himself from the nation. The nation's necessities are his necessities; the nation's characteristics, his characteristics; the nation's opportunities, his opportunities; weightier than all, the nation's duties are his duties. Duty is a great word. It is a greater word than the word Wealth; greater than the words, Money, Power, Glory, Dominance. It is the word which makes all the other words worth while. No sane man, no lover of his kind, no gentle man, can tolerate mere strength which is not directed to high purposes. Every one of us dislikes cant and all hypocrisy. Pretense of high purposes, which we know very

well are not in the heart of the man who professes them, is repellent. But every one of us uncovers before the man whom in our very being we know to be both powerful and just. This is true even when such a man is a bitter personal enemy. "I hate him, but I must follow him. I cannot help it," exclaimed a local politician of a political leader whose boldness and forgetfulness of self in a great emergency had chained the attention of a state. "I must follow him—because he has been just." And so the ward politician of an American town repeated in substance the dying words of France's most accomplished statesman.

Our critics assert that we are defective in art and the graces of life, but admit our power. In sheer might we are a Berserker people. Very well! What are we going to do with that power? We are going to conserve it, save it, regulate it, of course. But what for? To get fat upon? No! Merely to vaunt ourselves? No! To flaunt our flag before the world? No! To have it said of us that we are "unrivaled" or any other word of vainglory? No! What is all this power and wealth and domination for, then? Let any

American search his soul and he will answer: "For righteousness—for justice—for the good of the world."

So we see that justice to other peoples (and therefore justice among ourselves) is the second element of national (and therefore individual) character which this nation must possess.

We are "up against" all other nations—"up against" the world. (Let us not disdain our vernacular—the phrase of the "man in the street"—and therefore let us say "up against.") It is neither our merit nor our fault that this is so. Progress has made it so. Ocean greyhounds have made it so. The cable has made it so. The wireless message has made it even more so. If Lettré said a century ago that "the globe is a very inferior planet," what would he say to-day? Whether we will or no, we are mixed up in the world's controversies. So, to-day, is every nation. We cannot keep to ourselves if we would. It is useless to argue whether this is bad or good. It is so.

Consider an analogy. There was a certain tragedy recently. The press carried its details in full. One cannot help but think that such adver-

tisement of wickedness is a bad thing. But what is the use of moralizing? The press spread the news because the nation was interested; the nation was interested because to-day the nation is a family; and the press is the national family gossip. The telegraph, the telephone, the electric railway, rural free delivery, everything has made the American people a single community. A town in Iowa is now a suburb of New York. Crawfordsville, Ind., knows all about Boston. What happens in New Orleans happens in Chicago so far as the knowledge of the event is concerned. In the same way the American republic is a member of the family of nations—a controlling member and destined to be more so. Preach against it as you will, the fact remains.

Having this condition, therefore, what is to be done? Justice is to be done. Righteousness is to be done. High purposes are to be accomplished. It is not cant to insist that we are agents of divine purposes.

The hand that rounded Peter's dome  
And groined the aisles of Christian Rome  
Wrought in a sad sincerity;  
*Himself from God he could not free.*

So wrote Emerson. And he wrote truly of the artist. Did he not also write truly of this nation? What American has not entertained from his youth the dream that this nation shall be the arbiter of the destinies of the world? But the arbiter for what ends? Let us survive in history, at least, and in ideals wrought into deeds; for we shall surely have a physical ending (perhaps hundreds of years away, but none the less we cannot hope to escape the universal law of dissolution). A nobler race than ours will take our place. But let us be the noblest thus far evolved. Let us live up to our possibilities. Our possibilities! No contemporary mind can grasp them. The mind of the future will grasp them, but not the mind of the present. The mind which the world will produce a thousand years from now will consider our work and problems very easy to do and very easy to solve, just as we now consider the conditions of medieval times almost absurd in their simplicity. Let us show history, then, that we lived up to the best that was within us. Let us show the future that we Americans were the best possible product of our times. We shall do all this if history writes of us: "The



American people in their time were known of all men as 'the just nation.' "

We all read the Bible. Why do we read it? Because those ancient Hebrews (say what you will against them) gave the world moral ideas. They gave us those moral ideas along with crudeness and cruelty of conduct, it is true; but we forget the barbarity and we make the moral ideas our ideals and try to live up to them. The point is that truth, the loftiest views, genuine brotherhood are the only things worth while. And who would confine brotherhood to locality? It is "a contradiction in terms," as the logicians say, is it not? And if so, let us expand our thought and then ask: Who would confine brotherhood to boundaries—to nations?

By a chain of the logic of events, so strong that the wisest cannot account for it except upon the hypothesis of a divine wisdom which confounds statesmen, we have many world problems on our hands. How are we going to solve them? For the good of ourselves? Certainly. The instinct of self-interest which is ineradicable settles that. But what is our self-interest? Dollars and cents? Yes, that is an element; because dollars

and cents represent comforts, intelligence, ideals in the homes of the millions; and it is in the homes of the American millions that all these questions are going to be settled. But are they going to be settled exclusively for the comfort of those homes? Certainly not; for we are more than mere animals. They are going to be settled for the comfort of those American homes and also for the comfort of all other homes which our American influence reaches—and for the comfort of all these homes as a condition of their realizing the highest things of life. Therefore all our policies must be determined by those principles to which Richelieu's secret is the key—justice.

But what is justice? We have so many different opinions that it is hard to decide? Take the Philippine problem for illustration. Strenuous dissenters from the nation's policy affirm that we should leave them to themselves—that it is unjust to force upon them other ideas than they have. Others—and a majority—assert that the firm hand and, gradually, as they can comprehend instruction, the ideals of civilization are the true method with them, as with a child. In this

the writer shares. But of this one thing we may be sure: that whatever is just, whatever is best, the American millions will decide upon regardless of cost. In other words, power is worse than useless unless directed to the best ends which the possessor of that power is capable of conceiving. And the moral desire to do the right thing will give us the light to see what that right thing is.

Good manifestations of American spirit are found in those powerful Americans who "do things" in business. One such—a real "captain of industry"—said in young manhood: "I am going to do something in this world; I do not care whether it brings me millions or not. I know I shall organize vast industrial and commercial forces. I have it in me, and when I realize my plans I am going to do justice between capital and labor. Capital and labor, what misleading terms! Why not oneness? Why are not our interests all the same?" These words of the dreaming youth thirty years ago are now the accomplished deeds of the mature man. For that young man is now the directing mind of large industrial organizations. And beneath what others call self is an almost religious desire to

do his duty, not to the American people only, but to humankind. He has introduced "publicity"—a statement to the American nation, to the world—of the assets and prospects of his corporations. He has developed and put into practice profit-sharing among scores of thousands of laborers. He has given the toiler a "stake" in the enterprises the toiler's labor helps create. And in all of it as high an ideal of justice as that which inspired King Arthur at his Round Table has governed him. More and more it is governing most of America's eighty millions. It is true that there are among us those who are sordidly self-seeking. They will not prevail in private business or in public life. They are not worth considering.

Be sure, young American of the twentieth century, that you may succeed temporarily with selfish plans and unjust practices, but all your large and far-reaching and permanent designs will fail unless they are based on justice to your fellow-man and to the world.

A weak person may be tolerated for taking little advantages, but never a strong one. Putting it on the lowest plane, a strong man or a

strong nation can afford to be just. It is good business. It begets a respect and confidence which are the best possible assets. And so it is that out of the very fact of our overwhelming powers grows the corresponding necessity of justice in our dealings with the world. Like conservatism, it is an element of our national character which our situation compels. The American statesman of to-day will fail even in the regard of his own countrymen if, in foreign controversies, he does not do justice even though that should work apparent sacrifices of American interests. All admit the power of public opinion in our internal affairs. Similarly, there is such a thing as international opinion, world opinion. He is a daring and foolish man who refuses to heed the settled convictions of his fellow-citizens in town, county and state; and just so the nation is unwise which despises the esteem which the rest of mankind puts upon it. When it is seen that, through the years and decades and centuries, a nation is just, a moral regard is earned more powerful than fleets and armies.

As before insisted upon, the principles of national conduct must be the principles of individual

conduct of the citizen. Let us repeat, a thousand times if necessary, that no true American can separate himself from the nation and its destiny. Let us weld and fuse our destinies into the nation's destiny. Thus, the nation's ideals become our personal ideals; and if the American nation must be just, so must the American citizen. If "charity begins at home" no less does justice begin at home. Let every young American know that sharp practice is a certain method of business and social suicide. When a man after years of right living and upright dealing, has it said of him, "He will do what is right," he has achieved a power among his fellows which millions could not give.

We have a class of practical people who want to get at the physical machinery for doing a thing which ought to be done. It is a good thing that we have such a class; but sometimes their practicability makes them unpractical—in great affairs. If you cannot point out just how a desired end is to be reached they will say, "What is the use?" And so of this general necessity for justice as the ruling element in American policies and character, they will exclaim: "We agree, but by

what device will you determine justice and enforce it?" But the large things of human life and history are not to be determined by any devices, but by a thing more effective than any mechanism of legislation. That thing is the spirit of the people. That is what we are pleading for now. If a people have woven into the fiber of their moral and mental being the element of justice, they will work out right conclusions as each occasion arises.

This government is based upon public opinion; and public opinion is the composite conviction formed in the familiar conversations of the American fireside.

Nobody who knows anything of American life ever appeals to the individual. He appeals to the family. No man's individual opinion is sure to be right upon anything; but it will not be far from wrong if his opinion is the conclusion of all around his hearthstone. It is amazing with what economic sense the mother, wife or sister will modify the views of husband, brother and son; and even the boys and girls, when large questions of right are put to them, are swift with elemental ideas of large and rough justice. And

so the opinions which issue from the millions of American homes, combined, are in the long run going to be right opinions.

This is not only sentimentally so; it is practically true, and also scientifically correct. "Nature cares nothing for the individual," said an American scientist of universal and permanent reputation. "Nature eliminates the individual; Nature cares only for the pair—for the family." And so in the science of public affairs, individual opinion may be neglected; but the opinion of the family cannot be.

Let each American family, then, be the nation in miniature and decide all questions, foreign and domestic, as though it were the court of the last resort. There is one thing that everybody who has studied Russia must admire about that singular people, however much he may dislike other things about them—the whole nation is built upon the idea of the family. It is a natural method of national solidarity. It is our American method, too. We are a nation of families; and, as pointed out, these families are so connected that the whole nation is a family. So that if the American family adopts justice as its ideal in daily conduct,



the nation is naturally going to adopt justice as its ideal in international conduct. And the American family will—does—make justice its ideal. For selfishness, individual advantage, personal gain of one member of the family as against the common good of all, is a thing abhorrent to the very idea of family itself. Given the principle of selfishness in sufficient force and the idea of family explodes. Given the idea of justice and forbearance, and the family is vital and enduring.

We are at present used to the word “commercialism.” I like it very well if it means prosperity and happiness for the American home. But nobody likes it if it stands for mere animal opulence. But should any reader of these pages have reduced his habits of thought to dollars and cents, let us spend a paragraph in showing that justice pays higher dividends than anything else.

Take mercantile life. In early practice, when he was studying possible clients, a young lawyer heard a leading business man referred to as the “sharpest buyer in his line.” Investigation showed that he was a man who took advantage wherever he could. For a while it really appeared that success was the slave of his cunning

brain. But it was only for a while. Not two decades have passed and that man is not only a business failure but has rendered further business success an impossibility. He has lost credit and countenance among those with whom he dealt. "Advantage" and not "justice" was his motto, and that motto led him to the brink over which he plunged.

A young lawyer, brilliantly endowed and who started out with fine performance which argued a still finer promise, was seen by the judges on the bench and by his professional brethren to indulge in "sharp practice." He became fond of finesse in professional work. The ethics of the law were to him "foolery." He said one day in the intoxication of success over one of his masterpieces of craft: "Well, I admit it; I like sharp practice, and it wins, too. Besides, it is such fun to disarm a fool." What was the result? With all his finished swordsmanship he soon found himself dueling with all society; and that master antagonist disarmed *him*. With his superb abilities he has been quietly eliminated from his profession and from all human usefulness.

Take politics. It is noteworthy that the great "bosses" are scrupulous of their word and prize the reputation of "never going back on a friend" dearer than real statesmen prize the authorship of great laws or the championship of high ideals. This is an acknowledgment that even from their view point these bosses make personal justice the mainspring of their machines. They would fail otherwise. And how many times has the country noted the collapse of individual careers because of inherent selfishness and injustice. Sometimes a man by wealth or other means reaches a position of power. If his ambition gets the better of his common sense, his fears of possible rivals distort his whole moral perspective. He becomes unjust to other public men. He schemes for the downfall of those he thinks dangerous to his selfish hopes. If he controls a newspaper he is sure to see that his organ overcapitalizes his public work to the people and also that it discredits and conceals the work of other public men. What is the result? In the American home (that temple of American conscience) a great question mark vaguely forms in the family mind and constantly grows more definite until it is a burning

sign. And before that blazing interrogation point the schemes and ambitions of this public worker of injustice dissolve and come to naught. Why do they come to naught? Merely because the ambitious one has forgotten justice; and he who forgets justice, justice will forsake. And justice is the ruling deity of the American household and the American nation.

Into our daily conduct, then, let us each weave this all-powerful element. Its growth, upon cultivation, will surprise the most skeptical. Mr. Porter, in his work on "Moral and Mental Philosophy," which years ago was a text-book in all colleges, speaking of the force of habit, said something to the effect that "Neglect conscience in your daily deeds and it will soon be atrophied. Cultivate it and it will soon become as delicate as a woman's blush." And Hamlet tells his mother that "habit is a second nature." Modern scientific thought will not go that far; yet all will admit as a matter of daily experience that the influence of habit has a power something akin to the power of Nature itself. The power of habit in moral ideas is just as great as in immoral practices. So, if the habit of our daily

lives is justice, it will grow after a while into a fixture of our character. Conversely, if all resolve that the deeds of the nation in our transactions with foreign people shall have, above all, the ingredient of justice in them we shall soon come to apply to ourselves the same thought which makes us require the nation to be just.

Justice, then, Americans of the twentieth century! Pride in the republic is false if not based on justice. Hopes for the republic's destiny are mere mirages unless justice makes them real. Neglect not ideals. They are more permanent than cities or farms or railroads. And of all ideals, justice is the first; over all ideals justice presides.



AMERICAN THOROUGHNESS





## CHAPTER IV

### AMERICAN THOROUGHNESS

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EVERY American should be concerned with the large characteristics of national being. The little prudences and wisdoms of individual life and character, the individual will work out from his own experience and the councils of the wise. But all these will finally converge upon the few great standards of communal character. These must be elemental—can only be elemental; for the community is very much akin to nature—is indeed a manifestation of nature like oceans or stars or plants or animals. In the ceaseless flow of the Gulf Stream the unaccountable drops of water may each bear some different ingredient of matter, yet all are impelled in the same direction. So in our national life the individual with all of his peculiarities must conform to the general tendency of the mass to which he belongs. And what we are now engaged in is finding our natural course—making a survey of those fundamental ele-

ments of national character which grow out of the American people themselves—of their quantity and quality of power, their position for the using of that power.

We are not moralizing; we are analyzing.

There is no teacher of the fundamentals like Nature. And we are discovering here a kinship between Nature and peoples and nations. Think deep enough and you will find in nature and the nation not alone a similarity, but more; you will find a oneness, a unity. They have the same rhythmic on-going; the same convulsions, cataclysms and hurricanes; the same periods of peace, generation and fruitage—the same everything. Therefore the cosmic lessons of Nature should be the decalogue of national living and doing.

The first thing we observe in the material universe is thoroughness. Nature has the severe morality of the artist. She is not content to leave the picture unfinished. Like the true artist, she must work it out to the smallest detail, as in the case of the inspiring tale of the painter who starved and froze but finally finished his work to the last application of pigment no larger than

a needle's point. If Nature wants a desert she produces Sahara. If she wants mountains she is not content until thousands of miles of them are heaped one upon the other in a very plethora of rugged perfection; and we have the Cordilleras or the Alps or the Himalayas.

There is in her thoroughness a regularity, too: she will repeat seasons of the same kind—spring, summer, autumn and winter—through countless ages in untiring iteration. And each season in itself is perfect. She will have no icicles in June; it is the time for roses and yellowing wheat. And she gets through her work while she is at it. No doubt that is why the great characters of history have been so often likened to Nature—they did their work down to the final stroke with a splendid disregard of everything but the completion of their task. And so we find the deeds of Cæsar or Napoleon or the words of Milton or Goethe compared to the movement of stars or the perfection of fury the tempest displays.

Put tongues to the trees, rivers and plains of our continental republic and the word of power which all would utter in unison to the American

people would be "Thoroughness." The fertile alluvium of the Mississippi Valley cries out to the millions to whom its productivity yields life: "Be not in haste; the master hand that made me for you was infinitely leisurely and took æons for my preparation. For that master hand, like the hand of all mastery, was thorough." We dare not go brawling through our time doing immeasurable things by piecemeal. Who cares for the reputation of a Coleridge? "What vast possibilities his fragments of work display!" cries the critic. But what have we to do with his "possibilities"? What matter "fragments" to us? We care not for power, however bulky, nor for ideals, however exalted, unless they realize some finished performance. The heyday of Athens was less than a century; yet in that time of the ripeness and fruition of her effort she produced perfect work which does us good now and will do the race good as long as the race itself endures.

The defect of the present period of our American life is want of this very thoroughness. Perhaps it is natural that it should be so. America is the young man of the nations. And young

manhood is not careful of completeness, finish and perfection of task. The young heart beats with the force of the reproductive time of life, and arterial blood flushes the brain with currents of action and enterprise impatient of the careful processes which thorough thinking and thorough doing require. And here comes an apparent paradox and conflict of the natural and the necessary. Our age and situation and all the ingredients of our being make us strong and therefore negligent of details. But by the same token, if permanent and beneficent results are to be wrought by our effort, the firm hand of Thoroughness must hold in check our impetuositities.

The older peoples have learned this; and by doing thoroughly well their work with their comparatively inferior tools they are able to compete very respectably with us in commerce and industry and to surpass us in letters, art and philosophy. Yet with our youth and the imagination, ideality and daring thereof, with our coal in its beds, our iron in its mountains, and our fields ready with the fatness which they have stored up through their idle millenniums; with all the things with which the high gods of circumstance

have endowed us, the efforts of other nations would afford no comparison, but only contrast, if we were to use our opportunity with thoroughness.

The enemy of thoroughness is Haste. And the parent of Haste is Immoderate Desire. And this in turn is a quality and defect of youth. Consider this in our civic life. We decide to build a monument. We establish commissions for it, appropriate money not generously but lavishly. Next year we say, "What! is the work not yet done?" When, as a matter of art, the constructive brain has not yet had time to conceive the design which we would have perfect and everlasting. Or, we are confronted with the economic development of industrial organization awkwardly called "trusts." They are good as a whole; but they display along with good certain evil. At the evil we cry out, and should. We ask for laws, and are furious if they are not produced instantly; as though the lawgiver can turn out statutes as the lumber mill turns out shingles. When finally the law, under the pressure of public impatience and therefore full of imperfections, is produced, we expect results from it by the very process of printing it. It is a character-

istic of our national life at the present time. Thoughtful men and, better still, the thoughtful masses—for we have “the thoughtful masses”—see that the day has already dawned when this neurotic haste, with its crudity and partial performance, must give place to the very opposite qualities.

England has been successful as an administrative government because she has doggedly clung to the British ideal of thoroughness. The satirists and poets are seldom wrong; and he who pictured British character as a bulldog was accurate. But her bulldog tenacity is the tenacity of a purpose not to be loosened till its work is utterly done. So the British people in their time, which now appears growing to a close, have wrought well and carefully; and this notwithstanding the fact that the British mind for the last hundred years has shown a singular atrophy of the inventive faculty, a sort of sterility of resourcefulness.

We Americans, on the contrary, are luxuriant in expedients. We produce devices to meet a given situation with a readiness akin to that with which tropical soil shoots forth vegetation. We,

too, have, in the sweep of that divine purpose which directs the destinies of peoples, become an administering power. With our wonderful adaptability, our fertility of thought and our moral elevation we shall undoubtedly produce an administrative system for our new possessions as much in advance of anything the world has seen as the telegraph of our Morse or the electric light of our Edison is beyond the slow processes of communication and dull methods of lighting of other peoples and older times. That is to say, we shall do this unless our impatience spoils the thoroughness of our execution. That is the crux of all our difficulties. It is the explosive point of the Prince Rupert's drop of our destiny.

The Philippines would give us comparatively little trouble—on the other hand would yield an increasing harvest of material reward and of national satisfaction at righteous deeds done—if we would not deny Time a partnership in our effort. If we would be content to make our work thorough (realizing that thoroughness involves the regeneration, moral, mental and physical, of a people, the introduction of new methods, the planting of new ideals, and therefore requires



patience) the problem would become plain and the labor easy. The companion of the Thorough is the Gradual. How unreasonable to expect instantaneous results in world-work! We clamor for returns at the national countinghouse and for the metamorphosis of Malay barbarism into New England civilization in a shorter time than it took our pioneers to clear a field and raise a profitable crop.

Also, we are competitors of England and Germany in the world's markets. If we are wise enough to add England's former and Germany's present Thoroughness in industry and method, the world of commerce and trade is literally ours. If we make Thoroughness the superintendent of our industry the republic will be the commercial hegemon of all countries and all peoples.

Go to see the performance of excellent acrobats whenever you can. There is in their work far more than diversion; there is instruction which amounts to a stimulus. Observe the perfect calculation of distance, the sure, quick grasp of hand, the exact computation of time, and, through all the hazard of it, the grace and ease of the flying bird. And consider, you who observe, that

their art is a trivial one—the lowest form of amusement. Yet reflect on the infinite pains they take for the sake of perfection. They could not perform the simplest of their complicated feats did they not practice daily—did they not bend the whole energies of their life to thoroughness. Yet you who are a lawyer, or you who are a writer, or you who are a man of affairs, or still you other who are a statesman, or should be—all your occupations are large and worth while compared with the profession of the poor acrobat. But does any of us reach the acrobat's perfection? If we do not, he is a better man than we. He plays his part—plays it thoroughly. We dissipate our energies. We do as much as we must and no more. Said a writer of great present popularity on this very theme: “How long do I labor over my pages? Not long, for the publisher is eager for them. And they will sell as well to-day or better than if I put unlimited care to their revision.” But he was wrong there. Gibbon rewrote the first few chapters of his “Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire” fifteen or sixteen times; and the ancients spent a lifetime on what would now fill a single

volume. I will tell you, my friend, our national need is Thoroughness. It is my need of needs and yours too, doubt not. The acrobats bring it home to us with humiliating emphasis. So do sharpshooters and all other performers of the arts of inferior diversion. Observe the vaudeville marksman shoot through a finger ring held by an assistant, and reflect that it took years of practice and scores of thousands of shots to acquire the skill which has no use but to amuse us.

In Canton, China, you may see a workman with a bent steel tool and a lathe turning a block of ivory into a ball. Without breaking this ball he hollows out a space until within the first cover is another ball; and this he hollows out and continues the process until perhaps twenty balls are each within the unbroken sphere of the other. These spheres he perforates with little stars and flowers. He has, at the end of indescribable toil, produced nothing better than a beautiful curiosity, you will say. Yet, he has produced perfection; and no perfection can be called trivial. You go away from the patient workman with your arrogance humbled.

How is it that Thoroughness is the necessity

of our present national condition any more than it was yesterday or the day before? Let us answer this by taking commerce as an illustration. Until yesterday we were a developing people. We were engaged in the movement of communities within ourselves—planting new states, constructing railroads, building cities, locating and opening mines. We were “finding ourselves.” And though that process is not yet completed, it is so far completed that we are matured and are in direct competition with other mature people. Well, we cannot sell our articles unless they are better made and cheaper than the articles produced by other peoples. All this means not ingenuity only, which is to-day our best commercial traveler, but also thoroughness in the making and finishing of our merchandise.

Or answer it by art and letters. Heretofore, a writer has seen a demand for a book. “The demand may cease,” says the frugal man of the pen. “I will hasten my sheets to the printer.” But this commercialism of letters is passing. Writers are finding out that their Aladdin reputations which yield profit and the vainglory of notoriety wither overnight. And the money

greed which made them hasten to write the book of the hour is already succumbing to their instinct of immortality which commands them to write the book of the decade—the century. They are beginning to seize upon the lasting things of nature and life. The modern scientific method is helping this; and that spirit which is so stern a tyrant in the laboratory is spreading among the American masses. The American fireside is growing to be a tribunal of criticism. Note how impatiently a political sophistry is dismissed; how quickly the family circle rejects an untruth; with what contempt a slattern piece of work is cast aside. The magazine publisher recognizes this. He pays fabulous prices for the most careful productions. Ask him why, and he will answer: “Because the American public demands the best. Articles equally interesting but not equally veracious or equally thorough can be had at a small fraction of the cost of our best material; but, you see, the circulation immediately drops. The instinct of the reading public is unerring and knows without analysis the perfect work from the imperfect, and demands it—will have it.”

The time is ripe for the American Leckys, Mommsens, Spencers. The present century will produce the American Goethe and Balzac; we dare not say the American Shakespeare, for, like the Bible, Shakespeare seems to be the interpretation of the present and future as well as of the past.

“You Americans may give subsidies to your ships, but we shall still hold our supremacy in the passenger service of the seas,” said the president of one of the great German steamship lines. “We shall do this in spite of your subsidies, in spite of your undeniable gifts in construction and all enterprise, merely because you have not the gift of thoroughness; and we Germans have. We shall save enough in our selection of provisions; we shall win enough in alluring passengers by the quality of our wine and food to offset the artificial help of your government. For example, although I am president of this company, I personally select our wines; I personally examine the quality of our provisions. Imagine the president of one of your companies doing the like.”

I say not that this German commercial king

of the ocean spoke truly. I merely cite his statements. One thing is beyond all question, however—German maritime supremacy is built on the keel of German thoroughness. Please reflect that the German flag has become one of the dominant ensigns of the oceans only within the last twenty years—no time at all. But then, you see, the German ship lines in partnership with the German Imperial Government maintain a corps of students of the craft of shipbuilding. They have become the nicest calculators of the condensation of power, the enlargement of space in the construction of vessels, the adaptation of size and strength to capacity and speed the world has ever seen.

Yet Germany has only a window on the sea, while to the American republic the oceans are our encircling verandas. As pointed out in an earlier chapter, it is impossible that America shall not become the first sea power of the world and remain so. That is the verdict of our coast lines, our harbors, the currents of the deep, the trade winds and the globe's continents and islands. There is no appeal from the verdict of that jury

of geography. Yet, it will be no undisputed mastery unless Thoroughness is made the admiral of our fleets.

Republican government is so superior to any other form of management of organized society that it detracts not from the excellence of our institutions to mention some of the drawbacks. Perhaps the most distinguished benefit which our popular government confers on the citizen is unlimited opportunity. Yet unlimited opportunity means unlimited rivalry; and this means a haste of achievement which becomes forgetful of substantial results. So we have the craze of getting rich quick; and some fear that this may become a permanent insanity. One man makes a great deal of money; immediately everybody else wants to make as much or more. From this ambition of getting large wealth comes the desire to get it as quickly as possible. And this means the neglect of the solid and substantial, the ignoring of that which will be really beneficial next year as well as this year.

To all this a halt must be called. The national disease of million-mania must be checked and



finally eradicated. But like all social and industrial evils the disease is curing itself. So many men have piled up so many millions that large wealth is becoming common — almost vulgar. Therefore the minds of those who got rich yesterday are already turning away from the dreary emptiness which sheer wealth affords, to that fullness of life and real richness of reward which come of doing something lasting and valuable for human society.

Also, the complicated nature of modern business demands the highest order of constructive talent in the management of our enormous modern investments. We are developing, instead of the old-time "financier," real statesmen of business. The newly rich from fortunate adventure, mere chance or lucky speculation wait like messenger boys the command of the real generals of industry and commerce.

The general superintendent of one of the middle western railway systems, who started in as a freight handler at a dollar a day and now governs ten thousand men, said: "We must have an assistant superintendent. We have been looking for one for a year. The road has in its employ

half a dozen sons of multi-millionaires whose fathers would do anything to get them the place. I cannot consent that any of them shall have it. Highly educated as they are, wealthy and influential as they are, not a man of them is thorough and persistent. We cannot intrust the machinery of our immense organization of traffic to incompetent hands. The dividends of our stockholders are at stake; and the lives of our hundreds of thousands of passengers are a factor in the selection of my assistant. We are searching the country for the man who has the ability, the health, the habits, and above all the thoroughness which this situation absolutely demands."

This is an instance which any person widely acquainted can duplicate by the hundred. And so, in spite of the haste which the opportunity and rivalry fostered by our democratic institutions create, the very structure of our social and industrial organization requires not even integrity more than it requires thoroughness. Your great newspaper, your great railroad, your great industrial corporation would fall to pieces without it, as masses of matter would dissolve into

dust were it not for the mysterious force that we call cohesion. Thus we see that out of our national situation, out of the very elements of our present state of development, out of our individual needs as members of our continental community, Thoroughness is called for not as a matter of prudence or advisability, but as a matter of absolute necessity.

On Thoroughness hereafter our statesmanship must rest—no ill-considered laws, no rash policies for the American people.

On Thoroughness our diplomacy must rest—no brilliant play for present position, but each piece of American diplomacy comprehending the centuries.

On Thoroughness our industrial development must rest—no schemes which may dazzle for a decade and then break up because they are not carefully connected with the growth of the age.

On Thoroughness American literature must rest—no flashing comet of literary genius making the world gasp for the moment, but, instead, fixed stars that shine forever like the classics of the past.

Thoroughness, Thoroughness, and yet again Thoroughness, from the tying of your shoe-string to the solving of the nation's highest problems! It is the talismanic American word of the twentieth century.

## OUR PLACE AND PURPOSE



## CHAPTER V

### OUR PLACE AND PURPOSE

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**Y**OUR Scotchman has the genius of pointed and practical wisdom. It was Sir William Hamilton, I think, who declared that comparative history is the best of all instruction and an exercise for accurate thought superior to geometry or logarithms. Take a dozen nations, discover their differences, and we have multitudes of experiments in statecraft as useful to the philosopher of public affairs as the recorded tests of the laboratory are to the man of physical science. Find a common result of national action along any line, find universal occurrences repeating themselves continuously, and you arrive at something which scientific thought calls reliable truth.

It is a singular thing—or, rather, the expected and natural thing—that powerful nations have been religious nations; and that the higher their religion the greater their strength and the better uses to which it has been put. “All the great

ages have been the ages of belief," says our American interpreter of the universe. It is perfectly foolish to put this statement in the converse and to say that the higher a nation's development the better the form of religion its people develop. The fact remains, and we can put one before the other without destroying the essential verity. It is futile for our present purposes to file an historical bill of particulars in support of the above generalization. An entire volume of brilliancy and attractiveness might be written on the historical aspects of religions and nations. But it is agreed by those who are variedly read that the best national manifestations of the human mind have been those of people profoundly reverent. "The whole state of man," says Emerson, "is a state of culture; and its flowering and completion may be described as religion or morals."

Human thought in the mass, it appears, aspires to the noblest things under the mighty, and to this day unexplained, influence of ideals; and religion seems to make the very loftiest of all ideals concrete and vital. It establishes a living relationship, as it were, between the thoughts of



man and the Unknowable Thought which we feel all around us, and which we condense into the Sacred Name. Thus a people's purposes are given an elevation, fervor and purity best, and yet poorly, described by that vague, mysterious and awful word "divine."

Here is no argument that the American people ought to be a religious people as a matter of thrift or prudence, or national longevity or the sordidness of any material reward. We cannot consent to tune our lute to the ring of gold. We cannot consent that the chord we shall strike and the note we shall contribute to the music of human history shall be merely the minor chord of a thick and sodden prosperity. If the American people, as a nation, must be a religious people, the profit of that eternal circumstance must be a very minor incident.

We are agreed that, as a people, we are so superbly circumstanced in the economy and make-up of the world's map and human affairs that we dominate the whole contemporary human situation. In mere puissance of muscle, might of mind—out of the elements of us—springs a natural suzerainty over all human

thought and all human activities. Think carefully for a solid hour and you will concede that we ourselves did not create this world-lordship any more than we made the continent which forms our throne with the oceans as its footstool. Perhaps the greatest of all historical thinkers has declared that if a section be chopped out of any age of history and examined by itself it will be found full of contradictions, aimless advances and retreats, affirmations and reverses with no more meaning than the incoherencies of the conversations of the insane and resembling the stampeded and directionless rushings of myriads of ants whose little hill your foot pushes over; but that if you put this piece of history back again and survey it in connection with all that went before and comes after, you can no more deny an intelligent procedure through the ages than you can deny the evidence of the architect's plan as the heaps of indiscriminate material gradually take shape in the rising structure which, before a brick was made, was carefully drafted out on his blue-prints.

Also, we are agreed that our individual existence (which every mature man realizes is so brief

as scarcely to be worth while) and our national on-going (which we fondly hope will project hundreds of years beyond the horizon of our present sight) are both of them very like the eating and sleeping of mere animals if ideals be not at once the inspiration and end of all our efforts. A preceding chapter was devoted to the ideal of justice as the keystone of national righteousness. Try this experiment on any company of Americans you choose: Propose the subject of our national superiority and ask what we are going to do about it. The majority will always tell you that we are going to do right about it; we are going to work out good with it. Then ask, "why right?" and "why good?" and "why just?" and any other "why" which imperfectly inquires into the best American aspirations. The answer of the majority of that company will always strike a religious note—which, after all, is the dominant note in American character.

Let one sequester one's self and thus, and thus alone one can, put to himself the whole enigma of our position, power and purpose. In that mental solitude (away from the distorted proportions which one's personal interests give to

things immediately around him and where all things are seen in their just relations) all of our indescribably rich and marvelous national gifts and equipment seem foolishness, after all, if they are not for very much better ends than even we can conceive of and do not look to consequences as eternal as they are exalted. And yet all of these rich conceptions of the uses to which our endowment as a people must be put, if we would not be shamed in the eyes of mankind and history, are themselves foolishness unless in doing this work we act as the apprentices and servants of some master craftsman whose large design is not laid before us and would not be understood if it were laid before us.

Perhaps neither this analysis nor any analysis occurs to our scores of American millions—but no matter. The result does occur to them—flows in their blood, throbs in their brain, and is a part of the indrawing of each renewing breath. Thus all of our effort which otherwise would be merely stupid and purposeless becomes vivid and glorious with a certainty that we are executing the plans of the Infinite. The instinct of the divine within us becomes more than instinct—becomes

an intelligent if vague conception. And so we find that we Americans are a profoundly religious people. We cannot help it. It springs, like all other fundamental characteristics, out of the elements of our being and our place and antecedents in the history of man.

It is no easy thing to write of religion in national character. The subject is very high and yet all-permeating, and, at the same time, as delicate and sensitive as the ten thousand nerve filaments that shoot through our being. But when we are analyzing the large and controlling elements of American character (or, put it in the synthetic form and say, when we are drawing the outlines of that mighty form which looms so vastly against the modern skies, to, wit, the American)—when we are doing this, how are we to escape dealing with religion? For does not the church edifice dominate our cities? Do not cathedral spires give character to all our assemblages of commercial architecture? Does not Trinity stand at the head of Wall Street? Or go into the country, and do you not find the places of worship (and hard by them the school-houses) giving meaning and aspiration to the

whole rural landscape? At the critical hours of American history, when the noonday sky was midnight and the atmosphere saturated with murk—where do we find our great American leaders unable by human eyes to see before them? We find them on their knees, beseeching divine guidance and groping for a clasp of the Unseen Hand to lead them and this people into the light again. The whole winter of the American troops at Valley Forge is an historical panorama of heroism, self-denial and sacrifice. Yet every noble incident of that season of doom and dread furnishes but details of the background for the great central picture which the American mind loves to dwell upon—Washington on his knees at Valley Forge. It was Lincoln who, in 1864, declared, "God bless the churches, and blessed be God who in this hour giveth us the churches." And Washington, in 1789, immediately after he was made the first President of the republic, wrote to the bishops of the Methodist Church:

I trust the people of every denomination will have occasion to be convinced that I shall always strive to prove a faithful and impartial patron of genuine, vital religion. . . . I take in the kindest part the promise you make of

presenting your prayers at the throne of grace for me, and that I likewise implore the Divine benediction on yourselves and your religious community,

Let us take no more time with illustrations to prove the existence of the deeply religious in American character. Detailed proof is superfluous that a tree exists when the tree itself stands before you and it is daylight; or that the ocean exists when you are floating on its billowy breast; or that the sun exists when you see it rise and set.

Though no one is so basely practical as to desire the American people to be a religious people for the strength it gives us in the world's market-place or on the world's battlefield or over the world's high seas; though the meanest mind is still noble enough to concede that the American people should be a religious people, if at all, because of the truth of it; yet its practical results are notable and noteworthy. There is a satisfying stability, a conservative sureness, as well as a fervor of energy and loftiness of purpose, about a religious nation or a religious man. But take away this element of national character and you find a sort of aimlessness of national pur-

pose, a mingled volatility and depression, a sort of gayety of despair.

“You do not appear to me to do things for permanent ends,” said a young German to a citizen of a certain other nation notorious for its absence of religion. “Quite true,” responded the other, “but think of how much pleasure we get out of life.” But pleasure is not the purpose of human existence. Who dare say that we human beings—we men and women—are mere pigs in clover? Yet if the animal pleasures of life be the end of life, explain, philosopher of the material, the difference between the clubman among his cocktails and pigs in their clover? You are not going to get very noble national results out of a people whose gospel is, “We eat to live and live to eat.” No wonder such a people would be as variable as the track of a fish in the sea or a serpent on a rock.

“I am myself an agnostic, I am very sorry to say,” said a keen observer of public men, who particularly admired a certain American statesman, “but I wish with all my heart that —— [the man he admired] believed in *something*. Some years ago he threw away his faith in God,



and soon after followed his faith in man. Since then his public conduct has been astute, but with no aim but selfishness, and therefore without any aim at all. He started as a statesman and has developed into a demagogue. His career at first was as sure as a well-laid plan of a railway; his career since has been zigzag and meaningless." That public man died many years ago. His memory is already obliterated, although his immense abilities might have impressed themselves upon the whole nation for as long as a decade, or possibly two, had he had any fixedness in his public purposes or center of gravity in his public conduct. As it was, all came to nothing except bewitching eloquence on the stump (forgotten the next day) and consummate personal craft in transient politics (the memory of which died with its momentary effect).

Let us not get away from Nature. Thoroughness is natural and justice is natural, and so is religion natural. The study of ethnology is the most fascinating as it is the most informing of all studies. Professor Brinton's "Lectures on Ethnography" is a simple book which it is good

to read. But no matter what volume on the races of man you open, the scientist of human development will tell you that he finds religion to be as natural to the human mind as hunger is to the human body, and belief in a higher power quite as essential to the mental vitality of the masses as food is to physical vigor. Most of us have passed through the callow stages of questioning doubt and aggressive disbelief; and then most of us have returned, seeking after the sure hold on the eternal, which in the gayety and inconsequence of our younger days we shook off so lightly.

Those who are in these foolish stages will exclaim at such statements as are here set out: "What! the American people a nation of psalm singers! Let us have no canting hypocrisy in our national make-up." Nor would I have it so; but I would have the American people sure and sincere and believing and natural. I would have them instinct with fundamental rectitude. I would have them morally deep-rooted as the mountains and certain as ocean currents, and dependable as the sunrise, and punctual in the appointments which destiny has made for them

as the returning seasons. And all this moral sureness, certainty and elevation come only when a nation's morality is a religious morality. For if morals do not grow out of religion, they are nothing but conveniences, like clothing or windows or fireplaces or knives and forks—nothing but rules of prudence, like keeping one's feet dry or staying off the railroad track when the whistle of the approaching engine blows. But put the religious sentiment into this same code of morals and they become a part of your being, as the blood to the body. With practical morals a man will do a certain thing or refrain from doing a certain other thing because the effect is advantageous or the reverse; with religious morals a man will do the same thing or refuse to do another thing because he must—*because it is right*. He has taken definite hold of the hand of some Power higher than the god of gain and loss. Henceforth his life and career become worth while.

Also, henceforth such a man or nation becomes substantial and influential. It is astonishing (or is it?) how all of us in our merchandising, law-making and policy-building are governed and

dominated by the great religious thinkers. The politician's skill in corralling votes in precinct and ward is the servant of the great religious ideals, whether he knows it or not. Be he never so industrious or skillful, command he never so much money or other means by which suffrage is controlled among a free people, he could not to-day get ten votes out of a thousand for a candidate standing on a platform made of planks from Machiavelli's rules of statecraft. His most strenuous efforts would be nerveless, and come to naught in the service of any man, no matter how able, who is believed by the voters to repudiate in practice the fundamental truths taught in the churches.

The country was amused, a few years ago, at the platform announced by a New York politician who is said to be a very coarse and brutal and vulgar man. That platform consists of a single sentence: "Lift up the downtrodden." But that statement almost condenses the published purposes of all churches and all religions and all statesmen, and even the Master Himself. And thus the cunning of the low and base serves the higher powers in spite of itself.

Nature is a great restorer. It has been demonstrated that a river of sufficient volume can take the sewage of a city like Berlin and so purify it that, forty miles below, the water is fit for human drink. And what medicine is there like the iodine-laden atmosphere of the ocean or the climate of the mountains charged with the ozone which that ancient chemist, Nature, works up in those magnificent laboratories? There must be something in the mental and moral structure of a people which performs the same service. There are ptomaines of the intellect as well as of the flesh; and is it not a commonplace of daily speech to mention moral corruption? Well! there must be a curative movement, a purifying process and element to correct this. I find it in the religious tendencies of peoples. And here again is noted a similarity between Nature and religion in their like medicinal effects. Nature keeps the material universe pure and wholesome, and religion keeps the intellectual and moral universe sweet and generous.

“Seek strength on your knees,” wrote a wise woman to a friend in deep need. There is an advantage in keeping clean quite aside from the

beatitude of moral cleanliness. Strength, purity, wisdom—these words comprehend the sum of the elementally needful. Yet all men, from philosopher to plowman, from statesman to chemist, have learned that strength and purity and wisdom come from some great fountain of those qualities quite beyond ourselves. The greatest man in American contemporary legislative life—a man of ripe years and the seerlike quality of them—one of the real pillars of the republic, as Burke would describe him—says the Lord's Prayer every night as a child might. No matter whether he gets his strength or purity or wisdom in that way or not, the fact remains that he is strong and pure and wise. On the contrary, quite the most brilliant and forceful personality that has developed in American politics in the last quarter of a century has already burned out and is one of the "dark stars" circling through the orbit of our political system. "Is there an after life?" asked this man. "No," said he, answering his own question. "God is a myth. Religion is a vague fancy like the grotesque imaginings of childhood." It is not said that this mental attitude had to do with the moral decadence that set

in upon this fine character. The fact alone is noted. Where a successful man of affairs is known to be a sincerely religious man the respect which his fellows feel for his abilities is gilded with a sort of brightness. It is not uncommon for the heads of the great twentieth-century corporations (which are constantly searching for strong young men to enter their service) to inquire whether a subject of examination is religious or the reverse; and it counts distinctly in his favor if he is the former.

Instances of this kind can be told to you by any man well acquainted with the methods of modern "commercialism"—bad a name as this modern "commercialism" has secured for itself. There is a certain political leader who makes as careful selection of his lieutenants over his state as a general would make in choosing men and officers for a desperate enterprise, and an unvarying inquiry which this "boss" makes concerning new men whom he is gradually working into the "organization" is as to their church standing in their own community. All of which proves that your boss in politics and your promoter in business value the asset of moral qualities and

weigh with the fine scales of experienced judgment the religious character of the men with whom they propose to work.

The most insincere man of ambition will publicly profess his regard for religion and devotion to ideals. Who has not heard such a one speak before the people with the enthusiasm of well-affected unction? It disgusts us? Yes! But it should not turn us from the virtue and helpful quality of that very thing which the insincere one seeks insincerely to use. Because men use words foully or falsely is no reason why conversation should be prohibited. The bad uses of anything are, after all, a proof and negative measure of the good uses of that same thing. Let not cant, therefore, or the deserved repulsion which the misuse of this all-powerful and all-uplifting quality of human character works in us, destroy our appreciation of its ennobling benefits or prevent us, as individuals or as a nation from cultivating it with simplicity and sincerity. David did many things which he ought not to have done, and many things in the doing of which he appears not to have known what he was about; but he knew what he was about



when he wrote the Psalms; so did Solomon when he wrote the Proverbs; and so did that Other One when he gave to the world not only our code of daily living but the statutes also of our higher life.

We are not here indulging in individual advice to individuals; we are merely presenting fundamental elements of national character and noting the effect of their operation. A final word will illumine like a burning electric arc at midnight this whole phase of American character in the relation of the republic with the rest of the world. That word is this: Nations that are sturdily religious command the respect of every one of us more than those with whose name we associate absence of faith. Compare England and Germany, on the one hand, with France and China on the other hand. It is not said that France is irreligious or weak or akin in characteristics to that oriental chaos we call the Chinese Empire; it is not said that England and Germany are better than Europe's great republic; it is said merely that, rightly or wrongly, we have come to associate the names of England and Germany with a sound and tough religious faith

and France with the reverse; and our minds, influenced by this opinion, conceive Germany and England as being stronger, surer, better purposed and more formidable.

Or let us project *ourselves* upon the canvas, and imagine ourselves to be citizens of other nations; and then, standing and looking at ourselves, let us ask ourselves how we should look on the American republic, viewing it as unsympathetic and critical foreigners, if all our churches were destroyed and all religion extinct among us. Should we regard the United States as strong a power as we should if we beheld it as it is, sown with pulpits and saturated with religious sentiment? The plain answer to these questions will demonstrate the value of these qualities of our national character. We shall thus see how ripe with worth is that regulated faith in and dependence upon the universal Power. We shall thus see that without it our unweighable might could work destruction in human affairs like the undirected and resistless folly of an unmoral giant. And so we come to the consciousness that out of our situation and the elements of our being, as was stated in the beginning of this

chapter, arises the necessity for and, therefore, the presence of, the religious element in American character.

This republic is no vagrant nation. The American people are no aimless marauders. Their banner floats over no pirate craft, portless and doomed. They are no purposeless builders of a meaningless destiny. They obey divine directions and feel that they do. The stars of their flag are fixed stars. They are doing humanity's work—fulfilling God's mission for them—and they know that they are. There is, in the progress of the American people through history, in their connected and intelligent work in the world and for it, a sure faith, a high stability, a conservatism of righteousness, a permanence and durability of noble achievement. "Glorious deeds and lasting results inspired by glorious faith and purposes enduring as the everlasting hills"—let this be the final word which the gray chronicler of the rise and decline of nations shall write, a thousand years from now, when closing his review of the American people, their work and their place in history.



# THE AMERICAN TYPE



## CHAPTER VI

### THE AMERICAN TYPE

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“**T**HE American type has not arrived,” said an observant member of the English House of Commons, who has divided his time between statecraft and a study of the characteristics of peoples. The republic is like some vast crucible into which the High Power of the universe is still pouring various ingredients and compounding them with the pestle of events and the years. Now this Great Chemist of the ages pours in an element of unmixed Teuton blood; again, He adds a quantity of Italian blood; anon a dash of Slav and French. At another time it is Norse blood; pretty continuously He adds quantities of Celt, as represented by the Irish and Scotch; and mixing all with the great basis of Anglo-Saxon, the pestle goes round and round in the process of reducing the whole to a homogeneous mass.

Though the work is not yet finished, though the colors of the original ingredients are not yet

entirely blended, there begins to be a uniformity even in this early hour of our national youth. Fundamental characteristics have already been noted. Let us observe, now, some of the minor qualities which are already emerging.

It will be found that each one of these, like the elemental characteristics, grows out of our peculiar situation and condition. Make the following experiment: Read the paper of any city you may chance to be in for a week. Before the week is ended you will see announcement that some organization, some society, is holding its general convention there. To-day it is some secret organization like the Masons, or the Odd Fellows, or the Knights of Pythias and the like; to-morrow it will be some commercial organization like lumber dealers, cattle raisers, carriage builders. Everybody knows of the activity of manufacturers' associations; and the great labor bodies are real powers in the world of industry. The musicians of America hold annually a well-attended convention. The commercial travelers have an organization of almost military solidarity. A committee representing the southern cotton spinners recently called on a public man to



address them at their annual convention; and no body of business men "convenes" oftener than the bankers of the several states. And political conventions are a thing of perpetual occurrence. "The organization" is a momentous thing to the political worker, and rightly.

In short, your American is an organizer. He is gregarious. He must get together. He must reduce his activities to system. The switchmen of our railroads must have their lodges, officers and discipline. So must our mine workers. This tendency to organize among the American people is not a temporary passion. It is a trait of our character. It is a law of cohesion which our kindly destiny has set in motion to hold us together. It is useful that, in a republic, this should be so. A monarchy might well do without it, because the minute and rigid organization of the monarchy of itself absorbs the organizing ability of the people and renders their voluntary organization unnecessary. But our government is the people itself. May it not be that loyalty to the republic might possibly be an indiscriminate and idealistic passion, to be talked about in the club or at the fireside rather than acted upon,

were it not, perhaps, for the fact that our industrial and social constitution itself compels little organizations among us, and therefore loyalty to those little organizations? And is there not thus begotten in us a loyalty to the great central organization called our government which has its roots in the very depths of our being? Astonishing is the fervor manifested by college men in adherence to their Greek letter fraternities and affection for their emblems. It is even more curious to note the enthusiasm of full-grown men of experience and affairs for some secret order they belong to and their peculiar attachment to the emblem of their order; it is to them more important and significant than any family heirloom handed down through generations. But by the same token this intense and, to some, almost eccentric interest of sane and effective men in little organizations and the insignia thereof all focuses in a large devotion to country and flag. All of the little organizations are schools of discipline for citizenship in the big organization. All are training ships for the great ship of state. When an organization is not this—when the first principle of it is not loyalty to

the government—it is poisonous and deserves extermination.

We are now so welded together by common interests and so well trained in system that destruction of the government is quite impossible. Take a startling and impossible example: Suppose our Constitution should to-morrow by some miracle be withdrawn from the memory of man and all our high officials be paralyzed—still, as a matter of actual happening, there would be no continuous governmental chaos, no permanent business paralysis, no lasting disturbance of society. Our habits of orderly procedure would propel us forward with system and purpose. For order in home, church, industry, business, even in amusements, is a quality of the American character. It has evolved out of the nature of things.

For we have been left to ourselves; and system, which Peter the Great found it necessary to force upon the Slav, has sprung spontaneously out of our necessities.

Your American is profoundly in earnest. He takes himself seriously, and he has good reason to. He feels that he is executing a commission, the terms and directions of which have not been

written by human hands nor devised by human wisdom. But, for all that, he is no gloomy knight of heaven. He is no somber egotist of destiny. Convinced that his purposes are the very highest sent to any people, and that his success is as certain as any appointed event of nature, he looks kindly on the world and on himself. The phenomena of events yield him the fruit of humor as well as of duty. No analyst can call him gay—it is too light a word to describe the feeling back of his mellow laughter. But he carries off his mission with light-heartedness. There is a vein of happiness in his grimmest purpose.

It is useful for the student of American character to visit occasionally the high-class places of public amusement. You will observe that the audience is as vital, as full-blooded, as Englishmen were in the days when the "roast beef of old England" served to describe British character. Yet there is mirth among them. Your American enjoys his jest. In the orderly ongoing of his life, in the serious and creative walk of his daily affairs, he finds it necessary to have the funny, the eccentric, even the bizarre, to

keep the industry of his life from breaking its own machinery, just as the safety valve is a necessity in a boiler to prevent its explosion. Witness the curious and otherwise inexplicable spread, in all our Sunday newspapers, of queer and ridiculous colored supplements filled with nonsense pictures. And observe that gray heads feed upon them with the avidity of children.

Thus we see that the harp of our national character has among its strings the chord of humor which the Great Player constantly touches; and so is added to the music of our national existence a kindly liveliness which makes the strains of the whole composition attractive. And it is well that it is so; for on such an exalted scale is that composition pitched, so full of the solid and noble is it, that it would be splendidly monotonous but for the note of happiness and joy which recurs again and again. The American mind takes in a thing very quickly. We are the nation of telephones, telegraphs, high speed, instant despatch. We do things quickly. We see things quickly. We solve the problem while slower peoples are comprehending what the problem really is.

So when a proposition is stated we arrive at our conclusion and move on to the next. When a joke is uttered we have our laugh; but let the humorist beware how he repeats it—no squeezed oranges for us. We have enormous powers of mental digestion and we consume the fruit of life and circumstance with rapidity. We build some mighty structure—we accomplish some mighty feat. We have no time for self-admiration. What can we do better? is the question. And we answer that question by immediately doing something better. And so the impatience of American character is no illegitimate offspring. It is no exotic growth. It is quite a natural thing and has the good uses pointed out. But its dangers cannot be denied. And the conservatism and thoroughness of American character must prevent American impatience from spoiling the permanence and beneficence of our work in the world and history; and humor must make our life and effort tolerable.

It is curious to note the recurrence of racial characteristics in national life. With all our mixture the base is, in the broad sense, Teutonic.

And all people of this blood have been rulers, governors, administrators. They seem to have the faculty of administrative control over other peoples. They have, too, the instinct of territorial acquisition. Go deeper than the thought of any American, Englishman or German, and the voice that will speak to you from his instinct will say that the world is his inheritance. "The Earth is the Lord's and the Fulness Thereof" is the quotation over the stock exchange in London. "Yes," said a witty Frenchman reading it, "but these Englishmen think they are the representatives of the Lord. And what they mean is that the earth is the Englishman's and the fulness thereof." The young woman in Canada who painted the English flag with a bulldog standing by it and the inscription, "What we have we hold," struck a responsive chord in the British breast.

The envious laugh at the Emperor of Germany. "But," said a great German merchant, "say what you will, the emperor is the most popular man in Germany because in his foreign enterprises he represents the instinct of our German millions." Toward the end of the Spanish

War, when the question of holding the Philippines was the proposition of the hour, the writer attended a great meeting of the party in opposition. A powerful orator spoke against holding the Philippines. In the audience were many hundreds of workingmen. Three sat very near the front. They still had on their blouses; they were still fresh from the factory. Also, they were ardent members of the opposition party. Vigorously they applauded all of the old-time sentiments against the party in power. But when the speaker began his attack upon the policy of holding the Philippines one of them said to another:

"There's where I don't agree with him."

"No," responded the other. "I say keep every inch of them."

"Yes, that's my sentiment," said the third. "Get all you can and keep all you get."

"That's it," said the first of the three laboring men. "That's the doctrine. If our party goes against that, there's where I quit them."

This conversation was typical. Who that was raised in the country has not known an old farmer possessed of broad acres enough for him-



self and also enough to give a good farm to each of his children. Who has not known this old American farmer to keep adding to his possessions, and even to mortgage what he already has to secure additions to his surplus holdings? Why does he do it? He could not tell you. Nobody could tell you. He does it because the blood within him compels him to do it. He does it for the same reason that the bird flies southward on the approach of winter and northward on the approach of spring. He obeys a racial instinct. In short, one element of American character is territorial acquisitiveness.

There is no use in wasting energy or time debating whether that is a good thing or a bad thing. It is so. And if it is so, it is so for a good reason. The Great Maker of us did not create this instinct without a purpose.

Great floods in the West, a few years ago, aroused the sympathies of the nation. Offers of help were telegraphed to devastated communities. The reply of one was characteristic of the rest:

“We thank you for your generosity, but we need no help. We can take care of ourselves.”

That answer reveals an American character-

istic—pride. We are, perhaps, the proudest of peoples. Undoubtedly it arises from our national doctrine and habit of depending on ourselves and winning our own way. We are a nation of farmers who have made their own farms, of manufacturers who have built their own factories. Self-reliance has been preached from our pulpits and taught from the desks of our schoolrooms and reiterated by our great instructor, Necessity. From the first it was considered disgraceful (and was so) for an American not to be able to take care of himself and those depending upon him. It is still so, and let us pray (and strive, as well as pray) that it always may be so. Hence, our pride—the child of our peculiar personal independence.

Hence, too, our generosity. We are called the most egotistical of nations, but are we not entitled to our egotisms? Is there a contemporaneous people (or does history tell us of any nation that lived in the past) who on the one hand is so masterful and on the other hand so cares for suffering, for want? We appropriated \$200,000 to help the afflicted survivors of the Martinique disaster; whereas France, to which

Martinique belongs, found a constitutional objection in the way of a like appropriation. We sent a shipload of provisions to starving Ireland. Let fire, flood, drought or famine; let epidemic, disease or any form of misfortune befall any portion of our republic, and the brotherhood within us becomes active and furnishes shelter, food, medicine, cash, prayers, tears, and every form of tangible aid and tender sympathy where needed.

It is personal contact with life's actualities that makes the American people intolerant of frauds. A foreign critic of us, in a book published some dozen years ago, said that we are mercurial in temperament, liable to gusts of enthusiasm, capricious in affections and dislikes. He observed that we were swept off our feet by an agitation one year and that a precisely contrary agitation equally swept us off our feet the next year. From the surface his observation was accurate; but he did not examine the whole texture and constitution of American character. A certain impetuosity of massed conviction is discernible in political and religious movements in this country. Yet that impetuosity has never yet failed to yield

to the most influential counselor to whom the American people ever listens, Old Father Second Thought. That we are hasty cannot be denied, but we are fortunate in the habit of pounding right on at a proposition until it is finally finished.

"A fault I find with your republic is that it encourages among the people love of notoriety," said an intelligent observer of our institutions. And who does not remember the Frenchman's book on American character issued anonymously nine or ten years ago? Every now and then the papers have bristled with stinging criticism from certain European writers upon the American love of the tawdry and vainglorious. Surface observation seems to justify their painful statements. If more careful analysis confirms surface observations, it is the most distressing fact of American development.

But I do not find it to be true. The man of gold lace, the attitude maker, the "grand-stand player" (how apt, after all, is our slang!) elicits the attention but not the respect of our American masses. Our tendencies are less and less toward the notorious. Bombastes Furioso can get no American audience to-day; whereas, a

quarter of a century ago his tinsel and sound attracted mightily. And who has not observed in recent years instances of the deadly effect which strut in a man's character has upon American opinion—that, too, even though the man be of excellent abilities with a record of uncommon service to the republic? On the whole, the ponderer upon American social phenomena must admit that our tendencies are toward the simple and sincere in speech, instead of toward the grandiose and pretentious; toward the quiet in ceremony, instead of the ostentatious; and so on throughout all the manifestations of American character.

For example, do we not all know that any American speaker or lecturer would be laughed at who used to-day the rhetoric of Burke; that the lilt of even Macaulay's rich style and the ponderous magnificence of Gibbon are tolerated only because of the real merit of much of their matter? Or, suppose to-day that an American President were to ride in a gilded coach with caparisoned horses, footmen and all the other spectacular accouterments which Washington is said to have used; would not the American

9—*Am. T. T.*

electorate reject such a President, even if he were conceded to be the very ablest statesman and the most distinguished soldier the republic has yet produced? Or would not the equally ostentatious simplicity of Jefferson, who rode horseback from the White House to the Capitol and tied his horse with his own hands to a post, be received with equal condemnation and for the same reasons?

Your American does not like the vulgar advertisement of a public man riding long journeys in a common railway coach when he can afford to ride in a chair car; and your American also equally resents the conduct of the public man who goes to the other extreme. For your American wants the genuine.

In all of this I discern in American character a subcurrent of the moderate. (Never mind the surface eddies—mark only the real flow of the stream.) There is among our masses a predilection for the simple. Were this not so we should feel despair for American institutions and America's future. With all our fervency of disposition, with all our intensity of purpose, with all our enthusiasm of manner, we are still, in the

great bulk, a nation of plodders. And thank Heaven that this is so! The fable of the tortoise and the hare has disappeared from our school books, but not from our current American folk talk. Walk, having ears to hear, among the people, and note their expressions. "Don't count your chickens before they are hatched," said a school urchin to an imaginative companion the other day—thus showing that in his home this pungent saying of Anglo-Saxon caution expressed the conservative wisdom of his family in 1908 as much as it did a hundred years ago. How interesting if some one who has the time would pick up and publish the sayings of the man in the field and forge and mine, of the woman about her household! All of them would be words of conservative wisdom. They would show that American life is the simple life. And doubt not that the simple life is the only life worth living.

The unkind observations of foreign critics and the superficial analysis of quick writers here at home are due to the eccentricities of a small class of the over-rich and the quickly rich, of neurotic public men who appeal by the methods of the

bizarre and the brazen, and of like clumps and coteries of foolish people among us. But all of these classes put together are practically unappreciable in the great make-up of American character.

If some supreme analyst of character could make a quantitative and qualitative analysis of American traits he would hardly mention the *flaring classes* among the American millions. In such an analysis he would scarcely set them down opposite the words "a trace."

Of course, it is not thought that analysis of American characteristics has been exhausted; no doubt an inventory of them has only been suggested in these pages. For American character is like the sea — fathomless and all-abounding, and revealing to science new wonders and riches; or like the heavens on clear and starry nights that discover to each new telescope of higher power new possibilities beyond. Defects we have — yes; mistakes we have made — certainly. Who believes the American people perfect? Surely, not the American people themselves.



But we do declare that we are making earnest efforts toward perfection.

We do assert that American character, on the whole, is sweet and wholesome and generous and high-purposed.

We do proclaim that we will make each year better than the last, each generation nobler than its fathers.

We do assert that each epoch of our history shows the flag planted a day's march onward and that the march will continue.

And, for proof of these claims, we Americans appeal to chronicle and to contemporary event; and, most of all, to the historian of the future.

[THE END]



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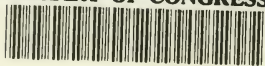




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